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STATE FOR WHA/CAR (BENT), STATE ALSO FOR OES/STC (LUCERO)

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TAGS: [KSCA](#) [TSPL](#) [AMGT](#) [OTRA](#) [APER](#) [SENV](#) [JM](#)

SUBJECT: NOMINATION FOR EMBASSY SCIENCE FELLOWS PROGRAM

REF: STATE 35305

¶1. This is a joint State-FAS-USAID message.

¶2. The growing global threat of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) to human and domestic animal health, agricultural industries, and entire economies, has generated interest among Government of Jamaica (GOJ) officials and private sector stakeholders to improve the capacity to respond to the spread of the disease to the western hemisphere in general, and Jamaica in particular. Despite conceptualizing a National Avian Influenza Surveillance and Response Program, the GOJ lacks the technical capacity to develop and implement key aspects of the program. The Embassy has assessed the GOJ's program and has, on the merits of its relevance to Jamaica's rural stability and public and animal health in the western hemisphere, decided to submit a proposal to host a Fellow under the Embassy Science Fellows Program (ESFP - see reftel), and to provide the required technical support. It is envisioned that the fellow would likely come through USDA or NIH.

¶3. Jamaica's location in the North-South America migration route exposes its wild bird population to the presence of HPAI in migrating birds. Further, the small size of the country and the extensive co-mingling of wild birds with "backyard" poultry magnify the probability of AI transmission to commercial poultry. Any such occurrence would have adverse social and economic effects in Jamaica due to the disproportionate dependence of rural communities on the poultry industry. Additionally, constant bird-human contact by "backyard" poultry farmers, and the resulting elevated risk of cross-species transmission of the pathogen is especially worrying to public health officials.

¶4. In light of Jamaica's vulnerability, and its responsibilities to the hemispheric efforts against AI, the GOJ has embarked on developing a comprehensive multi-agency avian influenza surveillance and response program, encompassing field epidemiology, specimen collection, laboratory diagnostics, public education and training, and the development of protocols to control and eradicate AI. The GOJ has acknowledged its incapacity to effectively develop and implement the program, and has requested the USG's assistance in providing hands-on scientific exchange.

¶5. After assessing the GOJ's program and technical requests, post has decided to commit resources to host a U.S. technical expert under the EFSP, and to provide all requisite support. The time horizon and nature of the Fellowship are well suited to the capacity-building efforts of the GOJ. As stated in reftel, post confirms that it can provide, housing, office space, email/internet access, local work-related travel expense, and other supplementary work-related costs for the participating Fellow. Housing would not be impossible during the summer months, but TDY units are more readily available outside of the summer transfer

season. Likewise, the GOJ is anxious to begin this cooperation as soon as possible. Additionally, the Fellow will be provided with the following Embassy services: CLO orientation, security, mail, check cashing, and access to post health unit in accordance with the rules governing TDY employment.

¶6. The participating Fellow should possess expertise in analytical veterinary epidemiology, and will be required to train Jamaican veterinarians and assist in designing and implementing the national AI surveillance program. Specifically, the Fellow will be required to provide guidance on: developing an AI sampling program / protocol; collection, packaging, transportation and storage of diagnostic samples; designing and validating samples; statistical analysis of sample data; aseptic collection of samples; post-mortem sample collection; identify laboratory facilities and procedures for AI testing, and conduct laboratory diagnostic tests for AI. Additionally, the Fellow should be prepared to participate in field training of private veterinarians, farmers, and other stakeholders. Post anticipates that a National AI simulation exercise would be conducted during the Fellow's tenure in Jamaica, if such a proposal is approved.

¶7. Since the Fellow will be assigned to post for approximately 60 days (two months), medical clearance will be necessary. While full security clearance will not be necessary, the proposed Fellow will be required to complete SF-85, Questionnaire for Non-Sensitive Positions.

¶8. Embassy point of contact:

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